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SUBJECT: GOI REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S IRAQ SPEECH

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) Foreign Minister Zebari told the Charge this afternoon that he liked the President's Camp Lejeune speech on Iraq, especially the clear statement that the U.S. does not support sectarian security forces. He also liked the President's insistence that the GOI focus on building its capacity to govern effectively. He noted, however, that some senior officials felt the U.S. had "informed rather than consulted" with the GOI prior to the speech. The GOI's understanding, he explained, was that in accordance with the Security Agreement, security decisions would be the product of close bilateral consultation. He assured the Charge that the President's speech was "generally in line with" the Security Agreement, but there were some "deviations." For example, there was no mention of the possible referendum on the Security Agreement. The speech was also vague on the transitional force. The public announcement of a date certain for withdrawal of troops by the end of 2011 also caused unease, as did the President's caveat that the U.S. would reconsider its withdrawal decision if violence returned.

[12](#). (C) The Charge reminded Zebari that she and the CG had briefed Prime Minister Maliki on several occasions prior to the speech, and fully intended to continue closely consulting with the GOI leadership. There was adequate consultation prior to the speech. Zebari took the Charge's point, noting he simply wanted to share the reaction.

GCC 3 Note

[13](#). (C) Continuing, Zebari noted that the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister (who visited Baghdad February 27, readout septel) and other Arab colleagues had expressed concern about the speech's description of the comprehensive regional engagement envisioned by the U.S. and the President's "rush" to accommodate Syria and Iran. There is "great anxiety" that the withdrawal of U.S. forces will create a vacuum that Iran will seek to fill; U.S. outreach to Iran is moving too quickly. Zebari said the Arab side would raise these concerns at the March 2 GCC 3 meeting in Sharm-el-Sheikh, and ask the Secretary to explain the U.S. vision for the region as a whole.

Too Many Envoys

[14](#). (C) Zebari also expressed a bit of concern that having too many regional Special Envoys would be distracting. The Charge assured him that these were our best diplomats, and that having them serve as Special Envoys would ensure that more attention is paid to critical areas.

BUTENIS